



HPAI H5N1 Influenza

“Bird Flu” Facts

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Did you know that the Department of the Interior is still conducting surveillance in wild birds for the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus H5N1? Although, U.S. news stories about this virus have diminished, HPAI H5N1 continues to occur in poultry and wild birds around the world. We want to be clear that the HPAI H5N1 subtype of influenza virus we are searching for in birds is different than the current outbreak of the H1N1 (“swine flu”) subtype that is currently affecting people.

Here are some facts about the HPAI H5N1 surveillance program:

In 2006, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey Alaska Science Center, working with a number of state, federal and Native partners, began looking for the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). The term “highly pathogenic” refers to the influenza’s ability to cause illness in domestic poultry.

From 2006-2009, 47,202 samples were tested. Not one has tested positive for the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus.

- More than 700 of the cloacal samples tested positive for some form of low pathogenic avian influenza. This is not surprising since there are possibly 144 different subtypes of flu viruses; most of which do not cause illness in wild birds, poultry, or people.

The bottom line is that the dangerous HPAI H5N1 virus has not yet been detected anywhere in North America.

- Among the birds sampled were 15,001 spring subsistence harvested birds; 29,843 birds that were live captured, sampled, and released; 2,358 birds harvested during the fall hunting season, and 153 birds found dead and examined.

A Few Facts about HPAI H5N1 Influenza in Alaska

(“bird flu”)



A gaggle of emperor geese

Donna Dewhurst/USFWS

- The current HPAI H5N1 strain of bird flu that has been in the news has not been found in any wild or farm-raised birds in America.

- No one has caught this virus from eating a fully cooked bird, either domestic or wild.

- When wild birds in other countries have caught this flu and died, it is believed that, at least in some cases, they caught it from farmed chickens or other domestic birds.

What You Can Do For Safety

The virus is more widespread in other parts of the world today than it has ever been, so now is a time to be careful. Here are a few things you can do.

- Cook any birds, wild or store-bought, until they’re done all the way through before eating them.

- Wash your hands and knife with soap and water (or at least use a packaged commercial antiseptic hand cleaner) after handling or cleaning any birds, or wear rubber gloves. (And be sure not to smoke or eat until after you’ve cleaned up.) In remote areas without cleaning supplies, use common sense and avoid touching your mouth or face.

- If you see dead or sick birds, especially if you notice something unusual, call 1-866-5-BRDFLU (1-866-527-3358). *Do not handle birds found sick or dead!*

For more information:

<http://alaska.fws.gov/mbasp/mbm/ai/index.htm>
or
http://alaska.usgs.gov/science/biology/avian_influenza/

Note: This material was updated in January 2010. The avian influenza issue is constantly changing. See the websites above to determine if the information in this copy has been updated due to new developments.